

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1    1. A method of displaying layered data, said method  
2       comprising:  
3           identifying a plurality of shading colors, each of the  
4               shading colors corresponding to a different data  
5               layer;  
6           identifying a plurality of data items to be displayed  
7               in a display window;  
8           for each data item:  
9               determining one of the data layers corresponding  
10               to the data item;  
11               selecting a shading color from the plurality of  
12               shading colors, wherein the shading color  
13               corresponds to the determined data layer;  
14               formatting the data item using the selected  
15               shading color; and  
16               displaying the formatted data item in the display  
17               window, wherein each formatted data item is  
18               positioned with a left margin substantially  
19               similar to a left margin corresponding to  
20               the other data items.

1    2. The method as described in claim 1 wherein the shading  
2       color includes grayscale shading.  
1    3. The method as described in claim 1 further comprising:  
2       analyzing an attribute corresponding to each data  
3       item;  
4       determining a visual highlight corresponding to the  
5       attribute;  
6       including the visual highlight with the formatted data  
7       item.

1 4. The method as described in claim 3 wherein the visual  
2 highlight is selected from the group consisting of  
3 blinking, text coloring, bolding, italicizing,  
4 underlining, striking through, shadowing, outlining,  
5 capitalizing, and font changing.

1 5. The method as described in claim 1 further comprising:  
2 receiving a data item selection from a user;  
3 displaying one or more formatted data items below the  
4 selected data item in response to the user  
5 selecting an unexpanded data item; and  
6 removing one or more formatted data items from the  
7 display area beneath the selected data item in  
8 response to the user selecting an expanded data  
9 item.

1 6. The method as described in claim 1 further comprising:  
2 displaying a graphic icon with each formatted data  
3 item, the graphic icon indicating whether the  
4 formatted data item is expanded.

1 7. The method as described in claim 1 further comprising:  
2 displaying an alphanumeric level identifier with each  
3 formatted data item that identifies the level  
4 corresponding to the formatted data item.

1 8. The method as described in claim 1 further comprising:  
2 displaying a level indicator bar with each formatted  
3 data item, wherein one margin of the level  
4 indicator bar indicates a data level  
5 corresponding to the formatted data item.

1 9. An information handling system comprising:

2       one or more processors;  
3       a memory accessible by the processors;  
4       a display screen accessible by the processors; and  
5       a layered data display tool to display layered data on  
6            the display screen, the layered data display tool  
7            including:  
8            means for identifying a plurality of shading colors,  
9              each of the shading colors corresponding to a  
10             different data layer;  
11            means for identifying a plurality of data items to be  
12             displayed on the display screen;  
13            for each data item:  
14              means for determining one of the data layers  
15                corresponding to the data item;  
16              means for selecting a shading color from the  
17                plurality of shading colors, wherein the  
18                shading color corresponds to the determined  
19                data layer;  
20              means for formatting the data item using the  
21                selected shading color; and  
22              means for displaying the formatted data item on  
23                the display screen, wherein each formatted  
24                data item is positioned with a left margin  
25                substantially similar to a left margin  
26                corresponding to the other data items.

1   10. The information handling system as described in claim  
2       9 wherein the shading color includes grayscale  
3       shading.

1   11. The information handling system as described in claim  
2       9 further comprising:

3       means for receiving a data item selection from a user;  
4       means for displaying one or more formatted data items  
5               below the selected data item in response to the  
6               user selecting an unexpanded data item; and  
7       means for removing one or more formatted data items  
8               from the display area beneath the selected data  
9               item in response to the user selecting an  
10              expanded data item.

1   12. The information handling system as described in claim  
2       9 further comprising:

3       means for displaying a graphic icon with each  
4               formatted data item, the graphic icon indicating  
5               whether the formatted data item is expanded.

1   13. The information handling system as described in claim  
2       9 further comprising:

3       means for displaying an alphanumeric level identifier  
4               with each formatted data item that identifies the  
5               level corresponding to the formatted data item.

1   14. The information handling system as described in claim  
2       9 further comprising:

3       means for displaying a level indicator bar with each  
4               formatted data item, wherein one margin of the  
5               level indicator bar indicates a data level  
6               corresponding to the formatted data item.

1   15. A computer program product for displaying layered  
2       data, said computer program product comprising:

3       means for identifying a plurality of shading colors,  
4               each of the shading colors corresponding to a  
5               different data layer;

6       means for identifying a plurality of data items to be  
7                displayed in a display window;  
8        for each data item:  
9                means for determining one of the data layers  
10                corresponding to the data item;  
11                means for selecting a shading color from the  
12                plurality of shading colors, wherein the  
13                shading color corresponds to the determined  
14                data layer;  
15                means for formatting the data item using the  
16                selected shading color; and  
17                means for displaying the formatted data item in  
18                the display window, wherein each formatted  
19                data item is positioned with a left margin  
20                substantially similar to a left margin  
21                corresponding to the other data items.

1       16. The computer program product as described in claim 15  
2                wherein the shading color includes grayscale shading.

1       17. The computer program product as described in claim 15  
2                further comprising:

3                means for receiving a data item selection from a user;  
4                means for displaying one or more formatted data items  
5                below the selected data item in response to the  
6                user selecting an unexpanded data item; and  
7                means for removing one or more formatted data items  
8                from the display area beneath the selected data  
9                item in response to the user selecting an  
10                expanded data item.

1       18. The computer program product as described in claim 15  
2                further comprising:

3       means for displaying a graphic icon with each  
4            formatted data item, the graphic icon indicating  
5            whether the formatted data item is expanded.

1   19. The computer program product as described in claim 15  
2        further comprising:

3        means for displaying an alphanumeric level identifier  
4            with each formatted data item that identifies the  
5            level corresponding to the formatted data item.

1   20. The computer program product as described in claim 15  
2        further comprising:

3        means for displaying a level indicator bar with each  
4            formatted data item, wherein one margin of the  
5            level indicator bar indicates a data level  
6            corresponding to the formatted data item.

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